

WEEKLY UPDATE #22 – AUGUST 27 – SEPTEMBER 3, 2016

“T’is a woodland enchanted!
The great August noonlight,
Through myriad rifts slanted,
Leaf and bole thickly sprinkles
With flickering gold...”

James Russell Lowell (1819-1891), “In the August Woods”

Where has the month of August gone? This newsletter takes us into the Labour Day weekend, the most poignant reminder that we are nearing the end of summer. There is very little to report.

1. Please ensure that radios are turned off before being placed securely on their respective chargers. Additionally, please ensure that you put them away!
2. One of the chitalpas (NOT the one beside the gravel path that runs along the western side of the Maze) is in full, beautiful bloom. Look for it on the back side of the Stone Garden where it appears to receive more shade. More information on the chitalpa’s sad history is available in the July 17-23, 2015 “WU”.
3. A *Cornus kousa* ‘Satomi’ is blooming up near the Maze even as its large fruits are forming.
4. The katsura fragrance in the Stone Garden area is very powerful right now.

Guide Goings On

1. Thursday, September 1 – Gardener’s Walk – Bruce M. will discuss special projects, including the garden’s bird strategy.
2. Thursday, September 8 – Guide Education - Alan Garr, the garden’s volunteer beekeeper, will speak on bees with a focus on the garden.

Garden Goings On

1. Vancouver Dahlia Society Show
Saturday, September 3 – 1:00pm-5:00pm
Sunday, September 4 – 12:00pm-3:30pm
Floral Hall and Cedar Room
Admission by Donation

2. Pt. Grey Chrysanthemum Association Early Chrysanthemum Show
Saturday, September 10 – 12:00pm-4:00pm
Sunday, September 11 – 10:00am-4:00pm
Floral Hall
Free

Garden Clippings

1. Marie B., Thursday guide and enthusiastic traveller, hit the road again this spring, this time to Portugal's Algarve for a whole month. As a gardener, Marie appreciates and admires the variety of plants and flowers that she observes, along with the markets, ancient little towns, the churches and, of course, the food and drink and the shopping. You can read about Marie's travels in the "Travel" section of the *Vancouver Sun* (August 20, 2016) which someone has thoughtfully placed on the bulletin board in the Volunteer Lounge. Another copy will be in the front pocket of the Guide Information Binder next week.

Notes 1 and 2 received from Malcolm

Note 1 - In **WEEKLY UPDATE #19 MYSTERY PLANT 1** Malcolm wrote: In the Australia and New Zealand section of the Southern Hemisphere Garden are numerous plants, about a foot tall, with either white or pink flowers. The flower centres are yellow or yellow to black. These are *Xerochrysum bracteatum*, Australian Strawflowers or Golden Everlasting.

Last week, the plants were labelled as either *Rhodanthe chlorocephala* subspecies *rosea* 'Pierrot' (Syn. *Acroclinium roseum* 'Pierrot') with the common name "Rosy Everlasting" or *Rhodanthe* Reselected Giant Hybrids (Syn. *Acroclinium* Reselected Giant Hybrids) with the common name "Everlasting".

To add to the confusion, both references give an additional synonym of *Helipterum*. Thanks are due to Sam for her help in resolving this confusion.

Note 2 - In **WEEKLY UPDATE #18**, in the **PLANT HIGHLIGHT - Eucryphia x nymansensis** section, Malcolm wrote, using a Wikipedia source, "*Mary Comber-Miles, who became resident botanical artist at the University of British Columbia...*". Guide, and former VanDusen gardener Gerry G recalls that she was resident botanical artist at VanDusen. He does not think that she was resident botanical artist at UBC.

(The use of Wikipedia as a reference is subject to the accuracy of both the original author and any follow-up editors.)

Another Notable August Date and a Solar Herb

“St. John’s wort, scaring from the midnight heath,
The witch, the goblin with its spicy breath...”
Traditional English rhyme

August 29 is St. John the Baptist’s Day and commemorates the death of St. John. St. John’s wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) is the saint’s special herb and is said to show spots of red upon its leaves on this day.

The stamens of the golden yellow flowers radiate like the rays of the sun, demonstrating its solar nature. In fact, in medieval times, it was called ‘Sol Terrestris’, literally ‘Terrestrial Sun’. According to Culpeper, the C17 English herbalist, St. John’s wort is “under the celestial sign of Leo and the dominion of the sun.” It is the sun on earth!

In folklore, St John’s wort was used to counteract the forces of darkness. It was worn to guard and neutralize witchcraft and sorcery and house entrances were adorned with it, along with green birch, fennel, orpine and white lilies, to keep evil spirits away.

Its medicinal properties have been well known since ancient times. It contains a volatile oil that has anti-bacterial and anti-viral actions and ancient healers and physicians used it to make an ointment for the care of wounds. Nowadays, St John’s wort is often prescribed as a mild anti-depressant.

While St. John is associated with the summer solstice in June, according to tradition he was beheaded on August 29th at the request of Salome; when the flowers are finished, the plant appears to be “beheaded” and the aforementioned red spots represent drops of blood. Thus, the growth, development and demise of the plant echo the fate of its patron saint.

Many varieties of *Hypericum* grow in the garden, including *H. x moserianum* in beds 74, 136 and 122; *H. olympicum*, native to Anatolia and the Balkan Peninsula, in beds 32, 32A, 32B and 58B; and *H. kalmianum*, native to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence region, in bed 135B.

A Twilight Tour of the Garden

“How sociable the garden was.
We ate and talked in given light,
The children put their toys to grass
All the warm wakeful August night.”

Thom Gunn (1929-2004), "Last Days at Teddington"

Last night, a very 'warm, wakeful August night', Sam S., the garden's Plant Documentation Technician, led an evening tour through the garden which enabled the participants to enjoy a somewhat different experience. Our first stop was the Fragrance Garden where we inhaled the perfume of summer daphne, stocks, honeysuckle and sweet peas and where Sam also collected pieces of the gasplant so she could perform a little experiment later on when it got darker. As the sun set and twilight settled in, the flowers in the White Garden seemed to acquire even more luminescence.

In the Black Garden, the contrast between the darker hued plants and the vivid lime greens, reds and oranges seemed even more evident in the subdued light. Our stroll through the Mediterranean Garden released the powerful scents of rosemary, curry and sage as we brushed against them, while the tall stalks of *Nicotiana*, the flowering tobacco plant, glowed whitely in the gathering dusk and exuded their delicate perfume.

Sam pointed out the batbox but it wasn't quite dark enough out in the open to see any flitting about. On the paths through the bamboo and along the Cypress Pond, however, it was dark enough that flashlights came out to light our way to the plaza.

Back in the Fragrance Garden, we stopped once more to breathe in the intensifying scents before heading up the Rhododendron Path in our quest to see and hear the Barred owl and maybe even the coyotes. By this time it was quite dark and Sam stopped under the Dove tree to see if she could get the gasplant to light up. Sadly, it didn't. But creatures of the night had emerged, including the ubiquitous slugs, moths attracted to the flashlights, various bugs and beetles and lots of spiders. We even saw a tiny trapdoor spider, related to the tarantula, scuttling across the path.

Behind the Ponderosa pines and up the path leading by the Transformation sculpture, we paused in the dark to listen for the Barred owl's call which wasn't long in coming. He evaded our upturned flashlights, however, and each subsequent call was a little bit farther away, seeming to taunt us for not being able to spot him. Sirens out on Oak St. triggered a coyote's howl and a lot of dog barking from the condos before all settled down and we were left to experience the warm, quiet dark and the nubby tree roots underfoot as we made our way back to the path that would lead to the silk tree just beyond the Waterfall. Its leaves were closed for the night which is why its Persian and Japanese names all translate as 'night sleeper'.

Pockets of warm air alternated with cooler, refreshing little breezes as we wandered back down to the Tropical Garden where the fragrant trumpet-shaped flowers of the *Brugmansia* nodded beside the path, inviting us to breathe in their strong, pleasing scent which is especially attractive to pollinating moths. A final stop in the Fragrance Garden to inhale for one last time the powerful blend of fragrance brought this lovely tour to an end.

Our 'sociable' garden at night is, indeed, a magical place, familiar but so different from its daylight presentation. I am immensely grateful to Sam for guiding us and pointing out its night time beauty and for all that she does to support the garden guides, the staff and the general public.

Please send any comments, suggestions, questions and corrections to pkbuchanan@shaw.ca and take a few moments, if you haven't already done so, to explore the wealth of information available to you at www.ericanotebook.com

Enjoy the cooler temperatures forecast for the next week as well as the start of Labour Day Weekend and have a wonderful week of guiding!

"Here and yonder, high and low,
Goldenrod and sunflowers glow,
Here and there a maple flushes,
Sumach reddens, woodbine blushes,
Purple asters bloom and thrive –
I am glad to be alive!

Robert Kelley Weeks (1840-1876), "In September"